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Trolley tour is planned for the holiday season

Ride to include light festivals in north

By Rasheed Oluwa
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A trolley could be rolling along northern Dutchess County streets just in time for the holidays.

A committee of the Northern Dutchess Alliance is developing a plan to institute a trolley system in time for the Christmas season. The alliance is a regional planning organization that represents a number of municipalities, community groups and business organizations in the area.

The trolley would tour all the light festivals in the northern part of the county, perhaps culminating with a dinner and fireworks show.

"We would probably have to subsidize a portion of the trolley in the beginning," said Jim Jeffreys, chairman of the Northern Dutchess Alliance and Milan town supervisor.

If successful, more event- and theme-driven tours could be organized.

Scaled-down version

The trolley idea is a scaled-down version of a transportation plan that was introduced by the alliance this spring. The initial plan called for a trolley that would cater to tourists and drop them off restaurants, hotels and historic spots along the Route 9 corridor.

Officials were hopeful to have a pilot program ready by this summer, but those plans stalled after studies showed the plan wasn't feasible.

Jeffreys said it would have cost \$20,000 to \$40,000 for the level of advertising and public awareness needed to get the project off the ground.

"We thought that the money could be put to better use working with the local chambers and businesses," Jeffreys said.

Ronald Coan, executive director of the Dutchess County Economic Development Corp., said the alliance was on the right track with its idea of offering marketed tours.

"A trolley could make a lot of sense," he said. "There is a need in northern Dutchess to connect people to the different venues along Rt 9."

MaryAnn Johnson, a smart growth planner with Scenic Hudson, also liked the idea. Not only could it solve some of the area's transportation issues and ease traffic, it also could provide an economic boost, she said.

"Hopefully people will get off the trolley spend some their money at the the local businesses," she said.

Relevant Web link: For information about the Northern Dutchess Alliance, visit the Web site at www.northerndutchessalliance.org